

## History of The Garden Club

(Taken from the May 1975 Anniversary issue of the Clipper.)

By LEE HAINES

The Community Garden Club of Duxbury extends sincere thanks to Mrs. Allan Waite and Mrs. Chester Churchill, who so generously assisted in completing the factual information of this article.

Duxbury was growing, and there was concern among members of The Garden Club that their group, who traditionally met in homes, could not accommodate the numbers of townspeople who were showing interest and abilities in horticulture. So, several ladies of this club, which met only in the summer and was the second oldest Garden Club (only to The Cambridge Plant Club) in the U.S., decided that a second club should be formed.

Thus, in the early summer of 1927, a surprisingly large group gathered in the beautiful, formal gardens of Dr. Nathaniel Emerson's home on Powder Point Ave., "midst the magnificence of an archway of tall, Grecian columns that formed a pathway to the varied areas of blooms and greens." Now the James Baty home, the garden is still of the same basic plan and an outstanding example of formal, landscape design.

### The Beginning

Dr. Emerson, a retired medical doctor whose enthusiasms and energies were now almost totally involved in the world of horticulture, became the first president of the group by unanimous vote at that first meeting. It was decided to name the new group "The Community Garden Club of Duxbury." Also, it was ruled that all future meetings were to be held in large halls or barns to accommodate as many persons as chose to become members in Duxbury. As a result, very shortly, the new club boasted over 100 members who eagerly entered into the activities of the organization.

For many years the newly formed club met only during the summer. Men as well as women attended meetings. The men were a part of the organization and participated in club activities. The men had

special classes in horticultural studies and always contributed their fruits and vegetables for competition in any local show. As late as Sept. 16, 1948, Allan Waite was chairman of the nominating committee. They joined the ladies for many years in monthly garden visitations about Duxbury and attended many of the garden parties and box lunch affairs sponsored by the club.

The first large project of the group occurred the year following their charter when the first flower show was held at Partridge Academy next to the Town Hall on Tremont St. The club was by then a member of the Garden Club Federation of Massachusetts and the show was sponsored under the guidelines as directed by the federation. Excitement ran high as news filtered through the town that the judges would be arriving from Boston to judge the floral arrangements, plant life and vegetables entered in competition.

In the first year of endeavor, many were those who contributed time and effort. Among those still living and memorable in their hard work are Mrs. Charles Sabine of King Caesar Rd., who is now 103 years of age; Mrs. Frederic Matthews of Massasoit Rd. and the Allan Waites of Plumfield Lane. They assisted the general committee of that first flower show which was directed by Mrs. John Adams of Powder Point Ave.; Mrs. Parker Wittington of Massasoit Rd. and Miss Louise Colburn of South Station St., who lived in the recently sold Kirby Kellar home.

Also active as one of the show's chairmen, was Mrs. Charles Bittinger, who lived in the large yellow house on Tremont St. across from Harrison St.

Mrs. Bittinger, whose artistic horticultural talents were as highly recognized as her husband's well-known portraits and landscapes, had several gardens. Outstanding were her plantings of roses and ferns and her profuse wild life garden. Several years after the club's founding, Mrs. Bittinger created a fern garden in Washington, D.C., which still bears a plaque with her name and historic fact.

### Shows

Through the years this garden club has produced many outstanding local flower shows, the most recent of which was "Port of Call" at the King Caesar House, and the last large show given in the new Art Complex on Alden St.

Another memorable show was the one sponsored in 1936 and held in the great Wright Mansion, now the present site of the new DHS. The high ceilings and large formal rooms, including a ballroom on the top floor, lent grace and beauty to the several days' affair. Before the show's opening, Thomas Murray gave an elegant luncheon which reflected the times, at his home which is the present residence of the Allan Waites. To honor the judges of the show, officers of the club that year were also invited guests.

The earliest project of the club, which was dropped only a few years ago when it was determined that its need had diminished, was The Benevolent Fruit and Flower Mission of Boston. Only a few times was Duxbury not recognized as the most generous in its contributions, always vying for top place with a gentleman on the North Shore who chaired a similar committee and tried each year to surpass Duxbury's large donations.

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(Continued from last week)

Every Monday morning during the summer months, the ladies would go to Duxbury gardens and fill hampers with flowers and greens to be sent to Boston. First sent by train from the old South Station; then, from Kingston when the Duxbury station closed; and finally trucked in each week when the railroad was no longer in service, they were taken to Horticultural Hall where they were made into floral arrangements for shut-ins. Home grown fruits and vegetables were also packed for distribution and home-made jams and jellies were included in the deliveries. The extent of the project is reflected in an early annual report given Friday, Aug. 23, 1935. "Last year we sent 86 hampers (of flowers), 171 jams and jellies, besides 11 bags of apples and other fruits."

The club has also ever been aware of any prime difficulty of nature in Duxbury. In 1934 they donated \$175 for a survey of the town for Dutch Elm disease; the still present-day problem of refuse on Duxbury Beach was hopefully solved on Aug. 23, 1935, when "Two barrels, each costing \$7.15 have been...placed at the beach, securely fastened, for the disposal of rubbish"; and the several years "war on ragweed."

On Aug. 9, 1935, it was decided that "a vigorous campaign was needed to eradicate ragweed in Duxbury." For the next 3 years, the ladies of the garden club would march forth to pull the ragweed, sometimes growing faint on extremely hot days in their exertion to eradicate the still persistent vine. During this time, the town voted to provide 2 trucks for loading the destroyed culprit. In September of 1938, "The club voted the sum of \$100, under the direction of William Burke and it was voted that this matter be dropped by the club, becoming a town project entirely."

### Float

Although the club is entering a float in this year's 4th of July parade, it is by no means a new idea. The club's records reveal many awards and prizes received for their entries through the years. In 1936, when the parade was in honor of the 300th anniversary of Duxbury, they received first prize for their float which was a great, old cart pulled by 2 oxen and filled with antique furniture of the Pilgrim's era. Mrs.

charming emphasis. Another year, Mrs. Chester Churchill (one of the early presidents of the club), recalls an amusing incident.

Entering a float before the days of "colorfast" materials, the ladies formed a sewing committee to make costumes of corn, peas, beets and sweet potatoes for the children to wear on the float — representing a vegetable garden. A great rainstorm during the actual parade compounded to create red, green, yellow and peach colored children as their costumes ran down their faces, hands and legs.

For years, Mrs. Harold Fitzgibbons' name comes to the fore, attending the horticultural meetings — first in Boston, later in Waltham at the Old Lyman House. She would bring back informative reports on growing and plant care and contributed much to Duxbury in solving many growing problems in the town. It was during those years, too, that Duxbury suddenly knew that fall was in the air when Mrs. Weber-Fulop would have her magnificent Austrian rose trees dug up and completely buried and covered in a trench for the treacherous winter months. Mrs. Fulop, a recognized artist from Vienna, owned the King Caesar House at that time, and her gardens were for many years one of the outstanding cultivated areas of the town.

When suddenly the world was engulfed in World War II, the club responded by giving instructions and suggestions on the best ways to cultivate Victory Gardens, of which there were hundreds in Duxbury at that time. They also sponsored a series of meetings on the proper way to can fruits and vegetables which was given by The County Agricultural School. The heavy volunteer demands of the Club's membership to aid, lessened attendance at some of the meetings, but the club's programs continued during these extremely busy years. At the time of Great Britain's devastation, Duxbury sponsored a year's project of sending seeds to Britain for cultivation.

Past presidents of the Community Garden Club of Duxbury, besides the founding president, Dr. Emerson, have been Miss Margaret Elliot, Mrs. Parker Whittington, Mrs. Maxwell MacDonald, Miss Louise Colburn, Miss Margaret Atwood, Miss Susan Moulton, Mrs. George Bahm, Mrs. Thomas Whidden, Mrs. Stuart Huckins and Mrs. Chester Churchill.

Also Mrs. Gordon Littlefield, Mrs. Phister Cowin, Mrs. Charles Thrasher, Mrs. Louise Hunter, Mrs. Emmett Fallon Jr., Mrs. Charles Hewitt, Mrs. Albert Crafts, Mrs. William Houghton, Mrs. Earle Tyler Jr., and Mrs. Richard Cotton.

Mrs. Roland Rattie is president this year.

mediately started sending news items of its meetings, benefits and special affairs for publication. records show 25 years of informing the town of activities through this personable media and the sent board of the Garden Club extends sincere thanks to Bobbie and John Cutler, who have been so enthusiastic and cooperative in our behalf.